

History of Death: Sources

How to use this list of sources

This is a list of some of the collections that may provide a useful starting point when researching this subject. It gives the collection reference and a brief description of the kinds of records held in the collections. More detailed lists are available in the searchroom and from our [online catalogue](#). Enquiries should be directed to the Duty Archivist, see contact details at the end of this source list.

Personal papers

Very often amongst family and personal papers accounts of deaths, letters of condolence and obituaries have been carefully kept. The letters can offer evidence of society's reactions to the bereaved as well as evidence of the dead person's contacts and influence. Below are examples of the collections of papers, which include such material.

Bowman, Archibald Allan (1883-1936); Professor of Moral Philosophy 1927-1936 (GUAS Ref: DC 77)

Large collection of letters of sympathy on death of Professor A A Bowman 1936

Lumsden of Arden (GUAS Ref: DC 112)

Much information about the deaths of friends and family as well as accounts of dying and death.

MacFie Family; sugar refiners, Greenock, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Liverpool (GUAS Ref: DC 112)

Includes correspondence, sermons, press cuttings, registers of family deaths, last words as well as poetry about deceased.

Napier Collection; including Robert Napier & Sons, shipbuilders (GUAS Ref: DC 90)

Weir, William Douglas; first Viscount Weir of Eastwood (1877-1959) industrialist and public servant (GUAS Ref: DC 90)

Friendly Society

Many firms or friendly societies had Funeral Funds for the workers or had such a service performed by the Friendly Society. Occasionally records of these endeavours survive along with the company or society records and show evidence of the attitude to death of the labouring class. (See Labour & Politics Source List)

Dixon, William Ltd; coal and iron masters, Glasgow (GUAS Ref: UGD 1)

UGD 1/35 Funeral Fund Roll Books 1841-66

Sailors Orphan Society of Scotland; charity, Glasgow (GUAS Ref: UGD 187)

Administrative records 1889-1962
Includes case histories often dealing with deaths and accidents at sea

Undertaking records

Although primarily a retailing group, The House of Fraser had a considerable interest in the undertaking business and this is reflected in the archives. Many of the surviving records are quite detailed for individual funerals showing where individuals were buried, with what show and ceremony and at what cost.

Croall, John & Sons Ltd; funeral undertakers, Edinburgh (GUAS Ref: HF 156)

Funeral day books 1855-1904
Funeral order books 1893-1959

Undertaking records (continued)

Dunbar, W T & Sons Ltd; funeral undertakers, Edinburgh (GUAS Ref: HF 118)

Burial certificates and cemetery receipts	1881-1909
Cemetery title books	1894-1949
Funeral cash books	1882-88, 1925-26
Funeral day books	1882-1963
Funeral journals	1928-71
Funeral ledgers	1882-1950

Harkess, G & Sons Ltd; funeral undertakers, Edinburgh (GUAS Ref: HF 91)

Funeral order books	1921-58
Private funeral ledgers	1921-46

Hide & Co Ltd; drapers, house furnishers, undertakers and upholsterers, Kingston-upon-Thames, London (GUAS Ref: HF 27)

Funeral ledgers	1834-41, 1891-1954
Press advertisement including history of the store	1978

Ogilvie, J & A Ltd; Aberdeen (GUAS Ref: HF 99)

Newspaper article	1966
Photographs	c1890-c1970

Strang & McLagen; funeral undertakers, Perth (GUAS Ref: HF 167)

Funeral journals	1953-61
Funeral ledgers	1897-1968

Wylie & Lochhead Ltd; furniture manufacturers and funeral directors, Glasgow (GUAS Ref: HF 57)

Funeral cash books	1883-1928
Funeral insolvents ledger	1887-1955
Funeral journal	1899-1941
Funeral order books	1837-1965
Guide to services	c1960
Letterbooks	1929-43
Minutes	1883-1962
Miscellaneous papers related to undertaking business	1969-72
Trades ledger	1928-47

Death Issues

Alistair G Tough, *Medical Archives of Glasgow and Paisley: A guide to the Greater Glasgow Health Board Archive* (University of Glasgow, 1993).

Further Reading

P Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford University Press, 1998).

R Richardson, *Death, Dissection & the Destitute* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987).

J Black, *The Glasgow Graveyard Guide* (Saint Andrew Press, 1992).